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ABSTRACT

This technical assistance packet is intended as a guide for those who develop programs in support of mentors of youth. It offers guidance to help mentors build trusting relationships with their mentees, and, ultimately, contribute to positive outcomes for the children and youth in the mentoring program. Successful mentoring programs provide ongoing support for the mentoring relationships, not just until the mentor and youth have been matched. Research on mentoring programs is unequivocal about the critical importance of ongoing supervision and support of mentors. Depending upon program characteristics and available resources, the details of this ongoing support may vary somewhat from program to program, but providing the support is critically important for all programs, whether they are school-, institution-, or community-based. The first section, "Monitoring the Relationships," examines approaches for monitoring and supervising mentors. The next section, "Providing Ongoing Training and Support," provides suggestions for inservice training and other forms of ongoing mentor support. The Conclusion describes strategies for recognizing mentors' accomplishments, both individually and collectively. The material also includes checklists to help guide planning, and a list of additional resources. (RT)

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SUPPORTING MENTORS

Technical Assistance Packet #6

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SUPPORTING MENTORS

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INTRODUCTION

Your program has recruited and screened volunteers, provided orientation and training that prepare them to become mentors, and matched them with mentees. The mentors and youth have begun to meet. Now what? What is your program's ongoing role in helping to build and maintain the mentor-youth relationships? What is your program's responsibility?

Mentoring is not always easy. Mentors have to build a relationship with youth that will help these young people discover their strengths and develop self-confidence. As is true of any friendship, it requires time for a mentor and youth to get to know, like, and trust each other. Especially early in the relationship, youth may be unresponsive—not showing up for meetings, barely talking, sending a message that seems to mean the mentor is unimportant. Mentors may begin to feel frustrated and, at times, fail to carry through on their commitment. Even when mentors are able to help the relationship past this early stage, youth can continue to seem uncommunicative, and new challenges may arise.

Successful mentoring programs know that their role in helping the mentoring relationships develop and grow by no means ends once the mentor and youth have been matched. In fact, research on mentoring programs is unequivocal about the critical importance of ongoing supervision and support of mentors. As one report noted:

> One of the strongest conclusions that can be drawn from the research on mentoring is the importance of providing mentors with support in their efforts to build trust and develop a positive relationship with youth. **Volunteers and youth cannot be simply matched and left to their own devices; programs need to provide an infrastructure that fosters the development of effective relationships.**[1]

More specifically, research has found that:

- Programs in which professional staff provide regular support to mentors are more likely to have matches that meet regularly and participants who are satisfied with their relationships.
- Programs in which mentors are **not** contacted regularly by staff have the greatest percentage of failed matches—those that do not meet consistently and, thus, never develop into relationships.
- Mentors (and, consequently, their mentees) benefit tremendously from the support they receive from program staff. While preservice orientation and training can

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[1] Sipe, C.L. (1999). Mentoring adolescents: What have we learned? In Grossman, J.B. (Ed.), *Contemporary issues in mentoring*. (p. 17). Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

> prepare mentors for some of the possible challenges ahead, ongoing monitoring, training, and related activities provide the practical and moral support that mentors need to keep meeting with the youth and get through the rough spots.[2]

Depending upon program characteristics and available resources, the details of this ongoing support may vary somewhat from program to program. But providing the support is critically important for **all** programs, whether they are school-based (where mentors and youth meet at an assigned time and place in the school), institution-based (such as programs that take place in a juvenile justice detention facility), or community-based (where mentors and youth arrange their own times and places of meeting).

The following pages are intended to guide you through the process of developing and implementing program strategies that support your mentors, help them build trusting relationships with their mentees, and, ultimately, contribute to positive outcomes for the children and youth in your program. The first section, Monitoring the Relationships, examines approaches for monitoring and supervising mentors, while the next section, Providing Ongoing Training and Support, provides suggestions for inservice training and other forms of ongoing mentor support. The Conclusion describes strategies for recognizing your mentors' accomplishments, both individually and collectively. The material also includes checklists to help guide your planning and a list of additional resources.

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2 Sipe, C.L. (1999). Mentoring adolescents: What have we learned? In Grossman, J.B. (Ed.), *Contemporary issues in mentoring.* (p. 17). Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures. Also see Sipe, C.L. (1996). Mentoring: A synthesis of P/PV's research: 1988-1995. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures;
and
Herrera, C., Sipe, C.L. & McClanahan, W.S. (2000). *Mentoring school-age children: Relationship development in community-based and school-based programs.* Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

MONITORING THE RELATIONSHIPS

Mentoring relationships are like any other one-to-one relationship. Things do not always go smoothly. Problems arise that, if not addressed, can threaten the relationship. And because mentoring relationships are programmatically arranged and occur between people of different ages and, often, of different backgrounds, there may be special challenges that mentors need to deal with as they work to build and strengthen their friendship with the youth. Even in the most rigorously designed programs—with careful screening of volunteer applicants and well-planned training of future mentors—problems occur that stand in the way of successful relationships. Ongoing monitoring and supervision of the relationships is essential so program staff and mentors can be aware when a problem exists and take steps to remedy it.

To facilitate the success of matches, programs will want to set up a regular schedule of individual contacts between a staff member and the mentor, the youth, and perhaps also the youth's parent, guardian, or teacher. The frequency and form of these contacts are likely to vary from program to program, depending upon available resources. However, regular contact is essential. In research findings, supervision has been the program element most consistent with a high rate of meeting between mentors and youth—and regular meetings over an extended period of time are essential if the relationship is going to be a "success."[3]

This section examines key questions about monitoring relationships. It concludes with a checklist that can guide programs toward setting up a process for monitoring their mentor-youth matches.

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF MONITORING?

The three major purposes are:

- To be sure the mentor and youth are meeting regularly
- To monitor the quality of the mentor-youth relationship and assess whether it is making progress toward its goals
- To help address problems that may be arising between the pair

WHY CAN'T MENTORS JUST KEEP A RECORD OF THEIR MEETINGS AND MAIL THE INFORMATION TO US?

Active staff involvement is essential, whether it is over the phone or in person. In fact, one study found that mentor-youth pairs were significantly more likely to *fail to meet* in programs where

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[3] See *Big Brothers/Big Sisters: A study of program practices.* (1993). Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

mentors mailed in records of the meetings than in programs where staff called the mentors to check about the meetings.[4] Regular interaction between mentors and program staff will not only ensure that pairs are meeting; it accomplishes other important purposes as well. It helps mentors feel supported, builds their commitment to the program, helps them be more effective in their role, and contributes to their retention. In addition, the information you collect through ongoing, systematic supervision should be useful data for your program self-evaluation.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD MY PROGRAM CHECK IN WITH MENTORS?

Many programs have found that the following approach works well:

1. **Contact the mentor within the first two weeks of the match.** Use this contact to make sure the pair is meeting, to find out what activities they have done together, and to assess how the mentor feels about the match thus far.

2. **During the next few months, continue to check in with the mentor every two weeks.** These ongoing contacts will help ensure that the mentor and youth meet regularly, and they are important for uncovering any start-up problems that require program staff's immediate assistance. (Many school-based mentoring programs keep track of how frequently each pair is meeting by having a log book at the school where mentors sign in. However, it is still essential to have regular telephone or face-to-face contact to discuss the match.)

3. **For at least a year, continue to check in monthly with the mentor.** The check-in discussions during this period can be more focused on monitoring the quality of the match relationship, assessing whether it is making progress toward its goals, learning whether the mentor or youth is losing interest in the match, and helping to address problems that may be arising between the pair. Your program should also make sure that mentors know how to contact staff, whenever necessary, for advice and support.

It is important to be somewhat flexible about this schedule—as the matches develop, some mentors may need to be contacted more often than others.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD WE ASK MENTORS DURING THE CHECK-INS?

Possible questions include:

- How is your match going? How do you feel about being a mentor?
- Do you and your mentee enjoy spending time together?
- What kinds of activities do you do when you are together?

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[4] See *Big Brothers/Big Sisters: A study of program practices.* (1993). Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

- How do you decide what activities to do together? Do you and your mentee have trouble thinking up things to do together?
- Do you spend much time talking together?
- How often do you see your mentee? How much time do you spend together at each meeting?
- Does your mentee keep appointments with you? Does he or she show up on time?
- When was your last meeting? What did you do together?
- Do you talk to your mentee on the telephone? How often? (for community-based programs)
- Do you need help with anything? Is there anything interfering with your match?
- How would you describe your mentee's behavior? Does your mentee exhibit any behavior that you do not understand?
- How are things going with the parents and other family members? Is the parent of your mentee cooperative? (or, for school-based programs: How are things going with the teacher?)
- Are you satisfied with how things are going?
- Is there any training you think would be helpful for you?
- Is there anything else we should be aware of?
- Is there anything we can do to help?

WHO ELSE SHOULD WE BE TALKING TO?

Programs should check in with all of the "key players" in a match to assess its progress and to learn about and address problems or potential problems.

1. **All programs** should check in with *the youth* within the first two weeks of the match. Then, school-based programs should check in with the youth monthly for the rest of the year. After the initial two-week contact, **community-based programs** should check in with either the youth or the parent/guardian monthly for at least a year. But if most of those contacts are with the parent/guardian, be sure to speak directly with the youth on at least a quarterly basis. Questions to ask the youth include:
    - Do you enjoy spending time with your mentor?
    - What do you enjoy most about having a mentor? What do you enjoy least?

- When was the last time you met with your mentor? What did you do together?
- How often do you see your mentor? How long do your meetings last?
- Does your mentor keep appointments? Does he or she show up on time?
- Who decides what activities you are going to do together?
- Do you like talking to your mentor?
- Is there anything you would like to change about the visits?
- Is there anything you would like me to talk to your mentor about?

Be attentive to when you may have to adjust this schedule. If a match seems as though it is off to a rocky start, you will want to check in with the youth more often to help identify and solve problems or, in some cases, to decide if the match should be closed.

2. Community-based programs should check in with the *youth's parent or guardian* within the first two weeks of the match. Then they should check in monthly with either the youth or the parent/guardian for at least a year. Programs' contacts with parents/guardians are important for helping them feel invested in the match and reducing the possibility that they may become resistant to, or jealous of, the mentor and attempt to undermine the relationship. During the check-ins with parents/guardians, you can ask:

   - Is your child happy with his or her mentor?
   - Does your child look forward to seeing his or her mentor?
   - Do they seem to enjoy being together?
   - Is there anything you would like me to discuss with either your child or the mentor?
   - How often does your child see his or her mentor? How long do the meetings last?
   - Does the mentor usually keep appointments and show up on time?
   - Is there anything that concerns you about the relationship?

3. School-based programs should check in with *the teacher* at least every three months. During these check-ins, you can ask:

   - How do you think the student feels about the mentor?
   - What do you think of the student's weekly activities with the mentor?
   - Is there any way you would like to see the activities change?

- How is the student doing in school?
- Have you observed any positive or negative changes in the student?
- Is there anything else we should be aware of?

AS WE MONITOR THE RELATIONSHIPS, ARE THERE PARTICULAR PROBLEMS WE SHOULD BE LOOKING OUT FOR?

The following list, while by no means exhaustive, identifies a number of the most common potential problems that can arise in mentoring relationships, either early on, as the relationship is developing, or after the friendship has formed. Each is a warning signal that the match may be in trouble.

As problems are revealed, the supervisor and mentor (and, at times, the youth and/or parent/guardian or teacher) should talk together to identify their causes and work toward solutions.[5] Potential problems include:

1. Meetings are not taking place regularly.
2. The mentor complains that the youth does not return phone calls (in community-based programs).
3. The mentor doesn't know what activities the pair should be doing together.
4. The youth implies that the activities the two are doing together are not fun and/or that the mentor is making all the decisions about what those activities will be.
5. The mentor complains that the youth doesn't talk during their meetings.
6. The mentor feels overwhelmed by the magnitude of the youth's problems.
7. The mentor feels frustrated by a perceived lack of impact on the mentee.
8. The mentor is breaking program ground rules.
9. The mentor and/or youth is losing interest in the relationship.
10. The mentor complains about getting conflicting messages from program staff and the student's teacher about what his or her mentoring role should be (in school-based programs).

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[5] For discussions of these issues and suggestions for training mentors in ways that help avoid or address the problems, see other materials in this series of technical assistance packets. They include *The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring*, *Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors*, and *Training New Mentors*. All were written by Public/Private Ventures for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Information for ordering or downloading these materials can be found in the Additional Resources section of this publication.

11. The teacher complains that the student is missing lunch, recess, or essential class work to meet with the mentor (in school-based programs).

12. The mentor is overly involved with the youth's family (in community-based programs).

In addition, however thorough your program's screening procedures, supervisors must be aware of the potential for child abuse by the mentor. This risk is obviously greater in community-based programs, where mentors and mentees meet one-to-one in unsupervised settings. Possible behaviors that might signal an abusive mentor include frequent breaking of program ground rules; overindulgence, especially excessive gift buying; excessive touching and inappropriate displays of affection; and an unusually large number of activities that center around being totally alone with the child. These behaviors, in themselves, are not evidence of abuse—but they do indicate that you may want to keep a close watch on the situation and consider increasing match supervision.

CHECKLIST 7:

MONITORING THE RELATIONSHIPS: DEVELOPING A PLAN

To facilitate the success of matches, programs will want to set up a regular schedule of contacts between staff members and match members. The frequency, form, and content of these check-ins are likely to vary from program to program, depending upon available resources and the population of children and youth served.

Have you:

- ☐ Identified the staff member who is responsible for supervising the matches and making regular contact with mentors and youth (and parents/guardians or teachers, where appropriate)?
- ☐ Established a schedule of regular check-ins?
- ☐ Identified how you will make the contacts—by telephone or face-to-face?
- ☐ Developed lists of questions to ask during the check-ins?
- ☐ Trained the supervisor in listening and problem-solving skills?
- ☐ Taken steps to ensure that mentors and youth (and parents/guardians or teachers, where appropriate) feel comfortable initiating contact with program staff?
- ☐ Developed a system to ensure that there is follow-up on potential or actual problems?
- ☐ Developed a record-keeping system so that, if there is staff turnover, new staff can easily learn the history and characteristics of each current match?
- ☐ Taken steps to ensure that all information remains confidential?

PROVIDING ONGOING TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Mentors are a scarce and precious resource, and effective programs work hard to retain them. Ongoing communication and a strong support system let your volunteers know that you care about them and their effectiveness as mentors. Systematic monitoring of the relationships is one essential method for providing support. This section suggests other ways you can support your mentors and contribute to the effectiveness of the mentor-youth relationships.

1. CONDUCT ONGOING TRAINING.

To prepare your new mentors to begin their relationships with the youth, your program should have provided preservice training that includes such topics as mentors' roles and expectations, youth development, ideas for mentor/mentee activities, communication skills, and effective strategies for building relationships. (See Additional Resources for information on training materials.)

As the relationships develop, there is often a need for additional training. Once volunteers enter the "real world" of mentoring and begin to apply what they learned during the preservice training, they may have questions and concerns, and express interest in acquiring skills or knowledge in specific areas. During their regular check-ins with mentors, supervisors might also recognize areas where additional training would help contribute to mentors' effectiveness and feelings of satisfaction. In addition, more experienced programs are likely to know in advance at least some topics they want to address during inservice training sessions.

Each program's particular circumstances—including its mission and goals, characteristics of its mentors, and the strengths and needs of the youth the program serves—will determine what inservice training seems most important. Potential topics could include:

- Diversity and "cultural sensitivity"
- Skills for helping mentees set goals
- Skills for setting limits with their mentee
- Problem-solving skills
- Strategies for dealing with issues that might arise with their mentee's family
- Child abuse, including neglect
- Teen sexual activity and pregnancy
- Alcohol and other drug issues
- Domestic violence

Some of these training workshops could be facilitated by program staff and cofacilitated by a current or former mentor. Others might best be led by an outside person with special expertise in the area. For example, someone from an agency that provides services to battered women could be invited to give a training on domestic violence and its effects on children; someone from a local Planned Parenthood agency could give a training on teen sexuality.

2. OFFER MENTOR SUPPORT GROUPS.

Mentor support groups are helpful because volunteers can discuss their frustrations and problems with others who have faced similar challenges. Providing opportunities for your mentors to come together in this way for an hour or two once a month (or bimonthly, or quarterly, depending on your mentors' time availability) can be an effective strategy for helping mentor-mentee relationships endure and grow. However, while mentor support groups are used extensively by some programs, they can sometimes be like "the blind leading the blind," reinforcing unproductive strategies for coping with difficulties in the relationship. Some level of experienced and professional oversight is needed.

Programs might want to have a regularly scheduled monthly or bimonthly meeting of mentors and use some of these meetings for support groups and some for training, or combine both at the same meeting. A sample format for a support group meeting appears on page 13.

3. CREATE ADDITIONAL WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR MENTORS.

Programs have developed many other approaches for supporting their mentors in ways that contribute to stronger mentor-youth relationships and increase retention of mentors. For example:

- If you have a community-based program, publish a monthly calendar of low-cost events to help mentors and youth decide on activities they would enjoy doing together. You can also solicit and distribute free tickets to sporting, cultural, and other events as a way to reducing the cost of mentoring for the adult volunteers.

- If your program or agency has a website, make it interactive so staff and mentors can use it to communicate. As an alternative, you can develop a listserv for mentors (and perhaps provide e-mail accounts for mentors who do not have one).

- Provide ongoing positive reinforcement. Let your mentors know what they are accomplishing. When you hear positive comments about the mentor from the mentee, parent/guardian, or teacher, be sure to convey them to the mentor.

While it is essential to provide ongoing support to mentors, respect the fact that they are likely to have limited amounts of free time. Find a balance. Overwhelming mentors with required meetings and training sessions can be counterproductive, but not providing these forms of support will contribute to failed mentor-youth relationships and poor retention of volunteers. Get input from mentors about what forms of support would be most useful for them. Decide which activities are mandatory and which are optional. Hold meetings and training sessions at a time and place that is most convenient for your volunteers. For example, if you have a number of mentors from one *(continued on Page 14)*

MENTOR SUPPORT GROUPS

This format works well for mentor support groups and can easily be modified so that it suits your particular program and mentors.

1. Have mentors introduce themselves and share something valuable that they have learned during the past month about mentoring children or youth. At the same time, encourage mentors to raise any questions they may have. You can ask:

   What is going well? What has worked for you?

   What personal learning would you be willing to share with the group today?

   What hasn't been going so well?

   Is there a specific question you would like answered or a specific problem you would like help in addressing?

   Record responses on a newsprint: Make one list of what has been going well and what they have learned; and make another list of questions and problems.

2. Review the questions/problems list to see which items overlap or fit into similar categories. On another page of the flipchart, relist the questions/problems so they are organized by those categories.

3. Working through the categories, have the group collaborate in answering questions and suggesting solutions to the problems. (You might also want to invite an outside "expert" to attend the meeting to serve as a problem-solving resource.) To help participants become involved in addressing the questions/problems, you can ask, for example:

   Does anyone want to respond to this question?

   Has anyone else faced this type of situation? How did you respond to it? What was the outcome of the way you dealt with it?

   How might you approach this challenge? What would some of you have done in this type of situation?

   If the group is large, you can organize participants into two or three smaller groups, with each small group working on part of the list. The small groups should then report to the whole group.

4. If you are also using this session to provide training on a special topic, you should provide that training after the group discussion of problems.

5. At the end of each mentor support session or inservice training session, give each participant a short evaluation form to complete. Include on the form a space where they can indicate areas in which they would like to receive more training. Have them complete the form before they leave the room.

(Meeting format used with permission and adapted from: Kavanaugh, J. (1998). *Everyday heroes: A Guidebook for mentors*. Albuquerque, NM: Wise Men & Women Mentorship Program, "Los Sabios.")

location—a business, a senior center, a military base, or a college—hold the sessions at that location, perhaps during lunchtime. Whenever and wherever the sessions are held, provide food, and always have mentors complete an evaluation form at the end of each session.

4. PROVIDE HELP WITH CLOSURE.

Mentoring relationships end. Sometimes they end early on, before they ever actually become a relationship, because the match fails to "gel." This might happen because the mentor is not following through on his or her commitment and meeting regularly with the youth, or because the youth is totally disinterested, or because there is just a "bad match." (Obviously, careful screening, matching, and monitoring strategies can help avoid many of these problems.) Sometimes matches end for reasons that have nothing to do with the bond between mentor and mentee—one of them might be moving out of the area, or the mentor's work commitments increase, or the youth becomes too old for the program. Sometimes, after a match has been in place for a period of time, the mentor or youth loses interest. And in school-based programs, matches are often designed to last only nine months, the length of the school year.

Ending the relationship can be difficult for both the mentor and youth. It is a key area in which programs should provide support for mentors to help them close the relationship in as positive and sensitive a way as possible. As a first step, programs should identify the criteria they will use for deciding when a match needs to be closed. Then they should develop a process for closing it. For example, as part of their process, community-based programs should talk with the mentee's parent or guardian about the impending match closure. In both community- and school-based programs, if a match closes prematurely, staff may want to identify a new mentor for the youth.

One important aspect of the closure process involves preparing mentors. You can incorporate a training session on closing matches into your schedule of ongoing training, or you might deal with it one-to-one with mentors. In either setting, you can ask mentors to:

- Think about a time when they have experienced the break-up of a close personal relationship
- Recall how it was handled—by them and by the other person
- Remember how the break-up made them feel—and how it affected the other person
- Consider, in retrospect, if anything could have been done differently so they and the other person would have felt more positively about the ending of the relationship

School-based mentoring relationships present a special situation because most are designed to end when the school-year ends. This allows an opportunity to plan carefully for closure. School-based programs have found that the following steps can help close the relationship in as positive a way as possible. The mentor can:

- Let the student know a few weeks ahead of time when their last meeting will take place, and spend some time discussing how that will feel for both of them.

- Perhaps do a special activity together during the last meeting, or give a small gift (if the program allows it), or exchange photographs.

- During the final meeting, talk about how enjoyable the relationship has been. Tell the student about her or his great qualities (creativity, sense of humor, hard work, perseverance, and so forth). Let the student know how those qualities and strengths will help throughout his or her life.

- Encourage the student to talk next year to a teacher, counselor, or school liaison if he or she wants to have a new mentor.

However carefully the relationship is closed, the process is still likely to be difficult. Children and youth who become involved in mentoring programs have often lost significant adults in their lives, and the end of the mentoring relationship may feel like an additional loss. Even students in school-based programs may feel betrayed or deserted when the relationship ends, despite the fact that the scheduled ending had been discussed when the student was first introduced to the idea of having a mentor.

In addition, however carefully your program plans for closure, there will be times when relationships end ungracefully. The mentee's family might suddenly move to a different community. The mentor might stop contacting the mentee or showing up for meetings, or abruptly announce to the mentee that they will not be meeting again. While programs obviously have no control over the mobility of mentees' families, ongoing monitoring of a match, as discussed in the previous section, can help identify when a match seems about to end. It thus increases the possibility that the program will be able to provide support that leads to a more positive match closure.

CHECKLIST 2:

SUPPORTING MENTORS: DEVELOPING A PLAN

Providing ongoing support and training for mentors will contribute to stronger mentor-youth relationships and increased retention of volunteers. Each program will want to develop its own system of support that takes into account the particular characteristics of its volunteers and the kinds of challenges they may be facing in their role as mentors.

Have you:

- ☐ Developed a process for getting information from mentors about the kinds of support that would be most useful for them?
- ☐ Identified topics that should be addressed during inservice training sessions?
- ☐ Provided opportunities for mentors to share experiences in formal or informal support groups?
- ☐ Created a schedule of meetings and/or training sessions?
- ☐ Decided which of these activities are mandatory and which are optional?
- ☐ Developed additional approaches for supporting your mentors?

CONCLUSION:

RECOGNIZING MENTORS' ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Programs have developed a number of approaches for recognizing their mentors' accomplishments. Some are direct and personal, such as potluck dinners and picnics, informal volunteer newsletters, certificates of appreciation, and birthday cards from program staff. In planning these kinds of "appreciations," it is important to recognize that people volunteer to be mentors for different reasons, and that some people are more comfortable than others receiving forms of "applause." It is helpful to get to know your mentors individually and develop a sense of what they would welcome. (See Page 18 for more ideas about demonstrating your appreciation to volunteers.)

Whatever your program's plan for recognizing individuals, there should also be a strategy in place to ensure that there is public recognition for the program in the community where it takes place. This is essential for helping volunteers see the value of their work. Public recognition can be accomplished though:

- Print media, including human interest articles in community and local newspapers and organizational newsletters. For community newspapers, try writing the article yourself—or have a staff member or volunteer do it—and send along a good quality black-and-white photograph. Read several issues of the newspaper first to get a sense of what kinds of articles the newspaper prints, how they are written, and how long they tend to be. Some programs also publish a monthly or quarterly newsletter that is sent to donors and other supporters as well as to volunteers.

- Electronic media, including community talk shows on radio stations and coverage on local television news and local cable community affairs programs.

- Public recognition ceremonies, such as testimonial dinners to which mentors, program supporters, and local dignitaries are invited.

- Participation in recognition/award programs that could include neighborhood-sponsored awards or awards sponsored by a local volunteer center. Nominate your program or a mentor/mentee pair for an award.

And, finally, when your program has positive evaluation findings—when you have documented evidence of what your mentors are accomplishing for youth—share that information with your volunteers so they understand how they are helping to make a difference.

RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERS

By Jeanne H. Bradner

From *Leading Volunteers for Results: Building Communities Today*

Much is said about recognizing volunteers. In a recent survey in Illinois, 44% of those responding said they don't think they do a good job of recognizing their volunteers. This response made me wonder if people think "recognition" is the end-of-the-year dinner. Many agencies don't have the resources to do this kind of event and feel bad about not doing it.

However, I believe good leaders recognize their volunteers from the minute they join a program by treating them as individuals with talents and interests who need to be matched to the right task. Leaders also understand the value of praising effective work at the time it takes place and treating volunteers as important members of the team. This kind of recognition is more important than any social event that might be held.

I have found over the years that while some volunteers love the big yearly event, others don't care at all and find their satisfaction in the work they do and the feedback from those they work with. This could be recognition in the organization's newsletter, a note from a pleased staff member or client, or a "promotion" to a more responsible volunteer assignment.

Volunteer recognition can be public or private and should be appropriate to the person and his/her contribution. Most of all, it should be honest and demonstrate some particular insight into what that person has done.

The following are some everyday ways to recognize volunteers:

- Learn what motivates each volunteer and make your recognition appropriate to what he or she thinks is important
- Give volunteers whatever training is necessary to perform well
- Thank volunteers genuinely and appropriately
- Give volunteers feedback
- Invite volunteers to participate in decision making
- Ask volunteers for their feedback
- Ask volunteers to recruit others
- Make sure the volunteers are doing work that is meaningful to them and the community
- Let the volunteers know about the outcomes from the program
- Never forget the power of a simple thank you, oral or written

(Excerpted with permission from *Leading Volunteers for Results: Building Communities Today* (1999) found on the Energize Volunteer Management web site: www.energizeinc.com.)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MENTOR TRAINING MATERIALS

Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors. (2001). Written by Public/Private Ventures for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL).
Available through the National Mentoring Center at NWREL, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204. Phone: 1-800-547-6339. Or download at www.nwrel.org/mentoring or www.ppv.org.

Training New Mentors. (2001). Written by Public/Private Ventures for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL).
Available through the National Mentoring Center at NWREL, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204. Phone: 1-800-547-6339. Or download at www.nwrel.org/mentoring or www.ppv.org.

Training Guide for Mentors. (1999). By Jay Smink for the National Dropout Prevention Center.
Available from their online bookstore at www.dropoutprevention.org.

Mentor Training Curriculum. (1991). National Mentoring Working Group. Washington, D.C.
Available through The National Mentoring Partnership. Phone: 202-338-3844; or through the "Volunteer Marketplace Catalog." Phone: 1-800-272-8306.

Volunteer Education and Development Manual. (1991). Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.
Available through BBBSA 230 North 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Phone: (215) 567-7000.
E-mail: national@bbbsa.org.

How To Be a Great Mentor. (1999). A guide produced by Kaplan, *Newsweek*, and the National Mentoring Partnership.
Available through The National Mentoring Partnership. Phone: (202) 338-3844.

OTHER PRINT MATERIALS

The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring. (2000). Written by Public/Private Ventures for the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL).
Available through the National Mentoring Center at NWREL, 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500, Portland, OR 97204. Phone: 1-800-547-6339. Or download at www.nwrel.org/mentoring or www.ppv.org.

Beyond Banquets, Plaques and Pins: Creative Ways to Recognize Volunteers. (1989). Sue Vineyard. Heritage Arts Publishing. An exploration of what recognition is and is not, with more than 300 specific ideas.

Yes, You Can: A Guide for Establishing Mentoring Programs to Prepare Youth for College. (1998). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.
Download from the DOE website at www.ed.gov/PDFDocs/yyc.pdf, or phone 1-800-USA-LEARN.

WEB SITES

www.nwrel.org/mentoring
National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory—includes dozens of publications that can be downloaded and a lending library of mentoring resources.

www.energizeinc.com
Energize, Inc.—an online bookstore for volunteer organizations that includes a reference library of articles and excerpts that can be downloaded.

www.mentoring.org
The National Mentoring Partnership—includes guidelines for mentoring programs and an "Ask an Expert" page where programs and mentors can submit questions.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCE

SUPPORTING YOUR MENTORS:

A few simple strategies can make your volunteers feel valued

By Christian Rummell, National Mentoring Center

As any mentoring coordinator can attest, creating a supportive atmosphere for your mentors can easily get lost in all of the other administrative priorities and functions you face each day. You spend so much of your time recruiting, screening, fundraising, and partnering with schools, churches, and community organizations that the time you have to provide individual attention and support to your mentors is often limited and unfortunately overlooked.

The good news is that with a few very simple steps, you can show your commitment and support to those volunteers who foster, guide, and encourage our youth. By making gestures to your mentors that they are very much cared about, valued, and needed to make your efforts successful, you will be increasing the likelihood that they will be long-term partners in your program. This investment will likely result in longer-term matches, higher mentor retention rates, increased recognition in the community, and greater possibility for fulfilling more promises to even more youth.

The following simple strategies can create opportunities to fully induct mentors into your program:

INTRODUCE YOUR PROGRAM

When a new mentor arrives, take the time to introduce your mentoring program. This should not be done hastily. You should build an introduction that describes the culture, history, goals, and successes of your program. Discuss why your program was started and what motivated you to get involved. Tell stories about the relationships that have formed—why you believe these relationships were (or were not) a good match. Even better, invite current or past mentors to share their stories in a panel format, encouraging questions and the sharing and passing on of personal experience. By taking the time to thoroughly introduce your program through this personal approach, you leave your new mentors with the important message that each story and individual is valued in your program and that they are a welcome addition.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTION

Another important and often overlooked component of mentor development is the inclusion of personal reflection in our training and ongoing support. By creating opportunities for your mentors to think about their experiences, you can create a valuable learning tool that will help them process their experience with their match, your program, and their lives.

CREATE LIFE MAPS

A great and simple activity for fostering thought and reflection in your mentors is a "Life Map." This reflection activity involves mentors drawing a "map" of their lives leading up to their decision to volunteer with your program. The only instruction involves asking mentors to include some of the "mile posts," "road blocks," and "scenery" that they passed on their journey to your program. During this activity, it is important to let the mentors know that they should share whatever they feel comfortable with. This is a great opening activity for a first-time interaction with youth and mentors as well!

BUILD A COMMUNITY

Another way that you can create a supportive atmosphere for your mentors is to foster the relationships among them. By building a community for mentors to receive advice and encouragement from each other, you will be creating a network of problem-solvers, nurturers, and learners. Through this investment, you will build a front line of support givers. (Over the long run, this will ultimately save you time, because you will no longer need to provide all of the direct support.)

There are several easy ways to informally and formally build this type of mentor community. These include "mailboxes" promoting informal social gatherings, and starting and maintaining program traditions:

Mailboxes. Open communication is essential for keeping your mentors informed and up-to-date about program happenings and changes. Mailboxes are a great way to demonstrate a commitment to keeping your mentors involved in what's happening throughout your program. A great and creative way for you to simulate the use of mailboxes is through the use of paper bags. During your orientation, you can provide each of your mentors with a paper bag. Ask him or her to write out their name and decorate it with personal meaning that resonates with the qualities that this individual values or respects. Hang these bag "mailboxes" in an easily accessible central location. Throughout the course of the mentoring relationship, drop inspirational quotes, thank-you notes, newsletters, and other materials that show the mentor that you care and that you are there for them. Also, encourage them to do the same for each other.

Social gatherings. Encourage your mentors to get together informally. By encouraging networks to form, you strengthen the ties between your mentors, and ultimately, your program. Potlucks are a great way to encourage social gatherings between your mentors. Start the year off with a program-sponsored get-together and encourage your mentors to continue the process on their own—once a season, once a month, once a week! This is a great way for your mentors to share experiences and a communal meal.

Traditions/mentor quilts. Traditions build cohesion and bridges generations in families and communities. So why not create traditions that do these same things in your mentoring program? At the end of the year, a great tradition that you can incorporate into your program revolves around the creation of a mentor "quilt." Provide mentors with blank quilt pieces (paper or fabric) that they can decorate with their mentees. During a year-end ceremony, sew (or glue/tape) together each of these pieces to make a quilt that represents all the experiences, relationships, and growth that have happened. Hang this in a central location—to let everyone know about the relationships that have been formed.

BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

These suggestions, while not applicable to every program, can be adapted to fit the specific size and focus of any group. These are just a few examples of possible activities, but the concepts within them are vital and should be present in whatever activities you choose for your program.

Most important to remember, your show of appreciation and support for your current volunteers and mentors is an investment. By creating an open, communicative atmosphere that welcomes and embraces its volunteers, your program will be rewarded by greater respect from your volunteers and community. This will, in turn, equal higher retention rates—and that's good for kids!

TRAINER NOTES:

TRAINER NOTES:

NATIONAL MENTORING CENTER

@

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